241 cereal, as well as other crops already mentioned are grown. The lowest and warmest spots of the plateau are usually used for various types of millet-sorghum, gesho (hops). Coffee grows wild or is purchased on the market, as are bananas from the lowland. After a few years of cultivation, a field may be left fallow for five or more years.

[171] The Amhara's irrigation and terrace farming resemble [462] those of Yemen, not of Africa. Farming is man's work, not [231] woman's. The one-handed plow is drawn by a yoke of two oxen, encouraged by a long fibre whip. The Amhara rerely uses other animals for drawing the plow.

Fallow land or new bush is broken during the dry season. A heavier-than-usual iron plow point is purchased from the Falasha ironsmiths, affixed to the scratch plow, and the area, after preliminary burning, is scratched many times at right angles. The stubble and weeds are then piled and burned. But for the actual plowing and seeding, the beginning of the rains is awaited.

312 Irrigation canals are completely washed out in the rainy season, and must be rebuilt in each dry season. Terracing is less common than irrigation, but on occasion mountain farmers of long residence do build low walls of rock and mud on hillsides to prevent severe washouts and landslides during the rainy season.

243 Tyēff (Eragrostic abyssinica; Poa abyssinica) deserves the latter Latin name, for it is the mainstay staple of Abyssinia, except in the south. It is an annual indigenous grass with seeds of pinhead size, cultivated

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

2. The Division of Labor.

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462 Besides the dimensions of time and space, the factor of the use of energy is important in material culture. The Amhara of Ethiopia still uses the force of their own muscles as the primary source of industrial power, and their material culture has thus remained basically unchanged, especially in the aspect of human organization of labor.

There is sharp seasonal division of labor among the Amhara, already described in connection with agriculture, the major occupation. This is largely determined by the climate, the heavy rains and little rains, the long dry season; and the very limited conquest of nature by the people in this area, which does not go beyond occasional irrigation ditches. As a result, the seasonal division of labor follows every minute change in the ewather, differs wonewhat from year to year depending on early or late onset of the rains. The human organization aspect of agriculture and feasts remains ruled by the weather, which dominates the ecological and religious calendar of activities.

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596 Human organization of labor among the Amhara seems to follow two major principles: (1), extension of the family organization. The extended family is self-sufficient in most needs for food, shelter, and the spinning of cotton for clothing. Salt and raw cotton are the only basic purchases, and only the services of smith, potter, tanner and weaver are actually essential, though there are a few other cultural elaborations. The extended family is also the major producing unit, in agriculture and animal husbandry. It has traditionally limited its own production

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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[596] because the often arbitrary, confiscatory taxation have lain heaviest on the producer of the most abundant harvest.

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554 (2) The attitude despising labor as an activity for slaves or lower-class ethnic groups, especially if the labor is skilled. Acquisition of special labor skills led to enforced migration, serfdom close to slavery, as has been described. Shame is attached to it, by the Amhara. For him, only agriculture, settled animal husbandry, warfare and spiritual activity in church or healing are acceptable. Even in this group of non-ignoble occupations, there are limitations. A farmer who would try to improve the quality of his land on any but a year-to-year basis, would be very unusual and an object of ridicule. For such land would arouse the evil eye, or the envy of the feudal lord, who would increase his tribute or, in case of family freeholds("rest"), increase his extortion of services. Even though a formal "corvee" has very recently been declared illegal, the local rural statute labor cannot be changed much by the central government, especially since it usually appoints former feudal lords to administrative positions in rural districts.

[633] Principle (1) dominates the division of labor by sex, and to some extent by age. It also sets the pattern for the need for and existence of market-places that become urban centers, places where specialist not found among the scattered hamlets can be encountered: in entertainment, in treding goods brought by caravan, in higher justice, higher church, better medicine, and recently, in the availability for some of the 8-year elementary school.

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463 The rural extended family is also the residential unit, the
596 hamlet, and this principle affects the rural residence of the ethnic specialists: the Faqi tanners occupy their own hamlets, Falasha smiths theirs, and, within each ethnic hamlet, the specialists are related by kinship, usually patrilocal as well as patrilineal.

463 Principle (2) here creates the basis forthe ethnic
563 division of labor. The concern of the Amhara is not the time and effort saved by each group doing a specialized task, it is to retain prestige by not working at a skilled manual task but having social inferiors do it for them. Time is not much concern in this culture, for labor is paid by the job, not the hour. Labor is cheap, and since the material culture is relatively undeveloped technically, the work does not require the close synchronization of modern, western factories. Thus, as long as the primary source of power consists of muscular force and simple technology, the old ethnic division of labor remains satisfactory to the Amhara, and often even to the ethnic specialists whose livelihood is assured.

The Amhara has more confidence that an iron plow-point or pot made by the Falasha is well-made, or that a toga woven by a Muslim will give long wear, than he exhibits if a poor Amhara has learned the crafts and tries to sell him his products. For, he reasons, has not the ethnic workman learned his craft since childhood, from his father, who in turn has practiced and perfected it for countless generations? The Amhara purchaser suspects that a new

463 561 males in their prime occupied, in teams of five, at smithing a plowpoint; while the elder weaves a toga at his handloom, as fast or as slowly as his physical condition or pride permit. [462] Pottery is made by the Falasha womenfolk, and men do not participate other than to load finished pottery on donkeys for transportation to the customer.

A. Division of Labor by Sex.

462 Whenever uses of energy are not developed technologically, there is usually a sharp division of labor by sex, in which the routine everyday labor is largely left to women. This is true in Amhara society. Women are tied to household tasks and babies, and therefore tasks that are bound to a fixed time are usually left to women. By extension, since water-carrying is the woman's task, pottery-making is done by women of the ethnic specialist class, usually Falasha. On the other hand, tasks involving tools rather than utensils, and tasks not bound to a fixed daily routine, are usually male occupations in Amhara society.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

Table 3: Division of Labor by Sex

Male occupations	Female occupations	Both
agriculture	kitchen work(except slaughter)	sale of products on market,
animal husbandry	grinding, crushing, husking grain	servants
slaughtering	carrying water from valley	
civil administration	fetching firewood or dung	beggary
military	gardening	musician-singer
religious occupations	spinning cotton thread	
healers	manual labor for church	
scribes, amulet writers	pottery-making (ethnics)	
church painters	restaurateur-prostitute	
weavers	tatooer and hair-dresser	
smiths	mead-brewer(urban)	
leatherwork		
hornwork		
porterage charcoal making		
hunting		
teaching		
judges		

The male occupations have already been described in "material culture"or will be dealt with in relation to their significance in "social organization", since they are usually more specialized and more inter-related to other aspects of Amhara culture. This is less true of most female tasks, so that most of them, except for "ethnic" and urban occupations, have been mentioned under "dietary habits"

462 or will be described under "division of labor by sex".

462 The hardest daily work of the female is the pounding
252 and/or grinding of grain. Sorghum(mashella), barley, even shembera peas and pepper, are dehusked by pounding with an up-and-down motion in a hollow wooden tree-trunk, with a stout wooden pestle. After that, the grains are usually left overnight in water for softening. The next day they, as well as the common tyeff grain, are hand-ground on an inclined flat stone, by use of a smaller stone of different type, weighing as much as 4-5 kilos, with the same back-and-forth motion of ancient Egypt, rather than rotary. To produce flour for the entire family takes the better part of each day.

316 The woman carries water from the valley every morning,
462 sometimes several kilometers, in a heavy earthenware pot
[482] tied to her upper back. It weighs 20 kilos when full. Only during the 3-months rainy season can she use nearby brooks and temporary watercourses. This female task makes it possible to locate hamlets on or near hilltops, far from water in the dry season, but safe from flooding in the rainy season.

462 Kitchen duties of the female, besides cooking and
251 daily baking of "enjara" bread, includes also the processing of meat for later use. After slaughtering, done by men because of the religious significance of this duty from which women are excluded, she cuts the meat into thin strips, called "zelzel", dries them in the sun to leather-like toughness, then stores them in the hut for the next feast, for use in the stew called "zelzel wot". Food -

462 processing tasks of the women also include the preparation of staples of the pantry, to be ready for immediate use when her other tasks have left her no time. The red pepper ("bärbarè") is preserved and readied in the form of a paste, by grinding it, adding water and salt, plus a bit of onion. This paste, called "dellèh" or "delleha" can then be used in wot, or to spice butter to be smeared on "enjära" bread, or mixed with oily nug paste and carried as a condiment and staple on travel. Another prepared spice condiment used by travellers is a dry mixture of spices, salt and "shero" (ground peas), called "meṭen". Butter may be processed by boiling it with pepper, or with the small yellow root of a rhubarb called "mäqmäqo" (Rumex abyssinicus), which is also used as a medicine against tuberculosis.

462 237 572 Fetching and producing materials for fuel is a major female occupation, though left to young girls when available. A special supply of dried cowdung is prepared for the rainy season, beginning right after Easter when the intermittent light rains are expected soon. Donkey and horse manure, "fanday", are not used by the proud Amhara, but cattle dung is flattened between the palms of women, dried in the sun, piled into tall heaps right next to the hut, then covered with a protective mask of mud and fresh dung. It is also women's task to watch the hearth fire in the evening, to check that it is covered with hot ashes over glowing embers, so that it will not go out and leave the hut chilly, on the one hand, but not burn so brightly that it might set fire to the hut.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

373 Little clay oil lamps are a luxury, since the fuel, often kerosene, must be bought at the market. Only churches and landowning farmers can afford it on occasion. In the church, beeswax candles, made by the women auxiliaries of the church from cotton thread and beeswax, serve for illumination at the early masses, and are surprisingly non-dripping.

372 Modern matches, made in Ethiopia under a government monopoly, are now cheaply available at all great markets, and have replaced earlier methods of making fire. The old method is still folowed in remote jungle areas such as Wolqait. There, fire is produced by friction, using a big, soft, bottom piece of "wanza" or "gerawa wood", and a branch or piece of hardwood, such as wild olive ("woyra") as the twirling or rubbing top piece. It sometimes takes an hour of effort. Even in the hamlets, where matches are available, they are saved by transporting fire from hearth to hearth in a broken potsherd (gel). Charcoal ("käsäl") is a luxury item, used sparingly only in pottery-making, occasionally to boil coffee if in a hurry or tea in urban places.

462 252 Baking is a female occupation, but becomes a source of income only in urban centers or temporarily at great markets, where restorateur-prostitutes engage in this work or hire less attractive women to do it for them. A woman who specializes in baking and selling "enjära" and other breads is called a "gagari". It is one of the very few money-producing occupations in which a Coptic Amhara woman can engage. But it is low prestige, and no self-respecting

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462 pater familias, certainly not a feudal "great man" or official will buy from her, and a lazy housewife, even an urban one, would be sharply criticized, even divorced, if she bought the product of the "gagari". For it is believed that her baking is carelessly done, that sand and dirt have not been picked out carefully before and during grinding, and the product is "fit only for Shanqalla" ex-slaves. One thin, round, two-foot pancake of "enjära" costs 5 Ethiopian cents (US$0.02); dabbo bread of course costs considerably more but customers are less frequent than for the daily "enjära" bread.

283 462 Spinning is the task of the housewife and of all women attached to a household, be it a hamlet kin group, or an all-female zar society (see chapter on spiritual healing). On her wedding day, the bride brings with her a small, ornamented reed basket, called "muday", in which she carries her own personal little distaff, some cotton thread on a reed bobbin that she has made, together with personal ornaments and tattooing dyes. This symbolizes that she is ready for adult womanhood and marriage, though she may be only 13 or 14 years old.

Carding of the raw cotton is also done by women. They beat it, pick out the husks, then place the cotton balls on the string of a bow called "dägan", tense the string with a stick, then agitate the string with the neck cut off a gourd (called "qel angät"). This loosens the cotton so that it can be cleaned and completely dehusked.

Every afternoon the housewife takes up her spinning, unless some special task takes her time. The distaff "enmärt" consists of a round, solid reed or thin round

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462 wood about 10 inches long, crowned near the tap end by a round, wooden disk about 1-1/2 inches in diameter. The reed penetrates it through a hole in the center of the disk, and the top of the reed has a small wire hook (called "qwanṭa") attached. The spinner uses this hook to rip out a bit of raw cotton, rapidly twirls the reed in vertical position, pulling thread after thread ("der") from the ball of cotton, and wrapping the thread on the reed below the disk. During this process, the balls of cotton are held in her left palm, the twirling of the distaff is done by her right hand, while the thumb and index finger of the left hand undo knots in the thread and generally straighten it out. The motor habit of this makes it possible to work very rapidly, the thread accumulating on the reed below the disk.

It is now taken off and rolled and connected in two possible ways. Some are rolled directly onto small reed bobbins 3-1/2 inches long, hollow, with outside diameter of 3/8 inches, called "qäläm" ("qäsäm" in Shoa province). These are later placed in the shuttle of the weaver for the weft. Cotton for the warp requires firmer consistency and more preparation. After spinning, it is either rerolled onto the sorter end of a partitioned distaff-shaped but much firmer wooden stick that may be as much as 2 feet long and 1/4 inch thick, called "mädawäriya". This rolling is done horizontally, on the upper thigh, in the privacy of the hut, or by an ex-slave Shanqalla servant woman in similar fashion. The other method which may follow this or serve as alternative, is the rolling of the

283 thread onto a warping reel in rough basket shape and size,
462 called "mäzäwär". It is a kneehigh frame of branches set on the ground, with a somewhat narrower waist. Several s skeins of cotton thread are thus connected and rolled into long, firm strands to serve as warp.

Sometimes it takes several months for a housewife to prepare enough cotton thread for the warp and woof of a single toga ("shamma"). But a diligent woman, if she has little else to do, can prepare enough for half a dozen [286] or more togas a year. The cotton thread is now given to the male weaver "shamani" who is to weave the toga. He may set up his loom in the back yard of the customer, or work near his own hut.

462 Skilled occupations for single women, e.g. "women between marriages" who often go to urban centers, are few. The brewer of mead and owner of the "tej bet", described under entertainment, usually employs several women as waitress-prostitutes.

462 There is another occupation, the woman beautician.
305 She may be specialized as a tatooer of women, "täqwari",
304 usually a Coptic Amhara woman, who is kept busy especially
[796] before great church holy days such as the Feast of the True Cross ("Mäsqäl"), Christmas ("Gänna") and Epiphany ("Temqät"). Hercustomers are more often divorcees "between marriages "(who can afford it because of earnings as restaurateur-prostitutes or beer and mead brewers), than young girls or married women, who have no cash. As the name indicates ("tequrat" means blackening), one of her jobs is to darken the gums between the teeth, to heighten

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304 the effect of their whiteness. She also tatoos the women's necks up to the cheek, in the shape of concentric necklaces, to make the neck appear longer, a mark of beauty.

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302 The hairdresser, "ras sari" is a woman who operates a traditional beauty parlor. She braids the women's hair front to back in as few as 12 or as many as 32 braids, depending on how much the customer is willing to pay. Her best-paying customers are divorcees looking for husbands, especially during the marriage season that follows the major harvest early in the dry season. A full two-hour job with a maximum of fine braids costs ETH$1.00 (US$0.40), while a simple job producing only few and thick braids, costs only a quarter of that. Many peasant women, and women unwilling to go to this expenditure, usually let their hair grow to a huge bushy crop, halo-like surrounding the skull, occasionally anointing it with butter boiled with "ades" leaves. But divorcees have the expensive hairdo done over as often as once every two months, and have it thoroughly washed during the process, so that their hair is much cleaner than that of married women.

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535 Another occupation of women is that of "azmari", musician-singer-dancer, who performs at more elaborate, wealthier, rural weddings, and nearly all urban ones. This will be described under entertainment. She is often accompanied by a male azmari, who plays the single-string violin or the banjo-type instrument, and who may alternate with her in singing rhymes, but who does not dance.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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B. THE ETHNIC DIVISION OF LABOR.

Division of labor according to the ethnic origin of of the worker is the most distinctly organized division among the Amhara. This is based on the attitude of the Amhara that labor (especially skilled labor and manual labor) is dishonorable. This attitude is reinforced by the close kinship ties which prevent a cultural deviant from shaming the members of his family by working in the district where they are known. It also reinforces the the ethnic boundary lines, and forces the non-Amhara, non-Coptic, working ethnic groups to live within the circle of their own kinfik, religious groups, and hamlets.

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[281 191] One of the most despised is the class of the Faqi, the tanners, who speak old-Cushitic languages such as Agau, are considered "pagans" in religion, and are associated by their trade with the hunters, the lowest class.

326 191 On a slightly higher level are the ironsmiths, usually of Falasha, who practice Mosaic Judaism, used to speak Quarinya, an old-Cushitic language, but use the same Semitic Geez language as the Copts in their religious worship and biblical liturgy.

563 463 754 326 [191] This use of Geez by the Falasha is puzzling to the Coptic priests, and brings about a sort of grudging respect for the Falasha, which somewhat elevates their status above that of the tanners. But they are suspected of practicing black magic in connection with their smithing of iron. Patrons take magic precautions to counteract all sorts of magic bewitchment by the Falashas whenever they have contact with them.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

463 563 their erstwhile conquerors.

The majority of the Galla are still primitive, dress in skins, use iron spears since they have few rifles, and are "pagan" or slightly islamized, in provinces south of the Amhara provinces. Their participation in the economy is largely agricultural and pastoral, both honorable occupations in the Amhara view. Their low (though rising) social status is due to their conquest, the African living patterns in their home provinces, the difference in religion and in language, but not to their occupation.

The following crafts fall under the ethnic division of labor:

563 323 [463] A. Pottery-making

This occupation can also be classed under Division of Labor by Sex, since only women, mostly Falasha women, engage in it. In the provinces where no Falasha women are available, pottery is made by Gurage or by Galla women. The only time a Coptic Amhara woman prepares a rough utensil she fashions an unsymmetrical container out of mud coarsely mixed with straw or cowdung and left to dry in the sun without firing. Compared with that, the pottery made by women of the other ethnic groups, is indeed "professional".

323 But in fact even the best pottery made by the craftswomen must be considered primitive. It belongs to the category referred to by archeologists in other areas as "women home industry". The firing is of the "first level", i.e. below 600° Centigrade. No potter's wheel is used. Glazing and waterproofing are minimal and primitive; only

323 the beginning of a slip appears.

There are several puzzles in this situation. In ancient Yemen and Hadhramaut, whence much of Abyssinian culture came, pottery was made with a true slip. The potter's wheel was known from ancient times in many parts of Asia and later in much of North Africa, both areas of ancient contact with and influence on Abyssinia. Yet pottery-making even of the craftswomen in Abyssinia has [462] remained African to this day: it is considered an extension of preparation of food and therefore a strictly female occupation. However, one of the most primitive African methods, e.g. of some Nilotic tribes, who shape pottery from a crude lump of mud, is not used by the craftswomen, though the aforementioned Coptic Amhara housewife may use this method, considered unskilled, and therefore not ignoble.

The first step in pottery-making is the selection of different types of raw material. Three types are usually selected and blended in different proportions for the right consistency and, occasionally, color: Red clay "färäfär", often containing iron ochre; sandy, fine clay from soil too poor for farming, "chəncha", which is sometimes fired, ground, kneaded with water, dried and broken before use; black soil from fertile topsoil ("läəmm") called "walka", often containing graphite. These are kneaded together with gradual additions of water. Next the woman selects a flat round plate of wood or metal to serve as the bottom support, outline and protection from dirt, for the pot about to be made.

E. Weaving

286 Most weaving is of cotton (Gossypium arboreum), grown in the lowlands of Ethiopia. It is of shorter staple but stronger than the Egyptian, imported from the Sudan.

286 563 [745] Weaving is man's work, and in Amhara territory is an "ethnic occupation" carried out either by Falashas or by Muslim Ethiopians. Emperor Menelik II tried to change this by encouraging Amhara men to take part in this basic and increasingly necessary activity, not only for the traditional shamma, but also for the spreading use of "qāmīs" shirt and jodphur trousers. But he had little success with it. Only very poor, "detribalized" Amhara (who have intermarried with socially lower ethnic groups) weave shamma togas, and cotton sheeting imports have increased steadily since Menelik II for other garments. One can therefore state that weaving remains an ethnic occupation.

286 There are two basic types of materials for shammas woven on the traditional handloom The more prevalent is the peasant-type, thick, warm, soft, tight-knit and sturdy, heavy material, that will last long; the other is thinly woven, almost like a muslin, and is preferred in towns, especially by the women who use it like a long shawl above a long dress. The latter type is more richly embroidered at the narrow borders.

When the housewife has cleaned, carded, spun and rolled the cotton thread for the warp on a warping reel,

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

241 variety) and linseed is grown in most parts of it. Where more shelter exists lentils and chick-pea are also planted, and another low-growing leguminous crop called *gwayo*, which is used only as a cattle fodder as it is believed to [824] cause softening of the bones in man! The barley is planted early and the other crops late in the main rainy season (June–September). Barley is sometimes also planted in the early rains, which are very uncertain here but usually begin in February or March. In this area however the early crop rarely gives a good return and sometimes fails completely. The plateau land, after being cultivated for a few years (often until it shows obvious signs of exhaustion), is fallowed for a period which varies widely according to the type of soil, but may be as long as five or seven years.

Down in the gorges, where the climate is appreciably milder, and where a primitive sort of irrigation can be practised on the level shelves, both chick-pea and lentils flourish. Some *teff* (a grass-like cereal greatly favoured for making the local bread) can be grown, as well as wheat and barley. Shelf cultivation seems as a rule to be continuous, perhaps because of the fresh sediment spread annually over the fields by rain and irrigation. In the lower parts of the gorges some maize and millet (*Sorghum*) can be found, but almost the whole of the area included on the map is too high for these crops. Other gorge products, unknown on the plateau, are tomatoes, chillies, coffee and *gesho*—a shrub whose leaves are used for fermenting the local beer (*talla*) and honey-wine (*tej*). Bananas, for no obvious reason, are not grown, but are brought to Debra Berhan market from the low country beyond the eastern escarpment.

The agricultural methods of the Ethiopians are far more advanced than those of any surrounding territory and do not belong to Africa. They can be paralleled among the west-Asian peasantry, and a close comparison with the methods of the Yemen mountain people might be especially fruitful. It was from this latter region that the Ethiopians' ancestors emigrated, before the [177] Christian era, and it is extremely probable that they brought with them both implements and a knowledge of techniques. Hence perhaps the use of the plough, universal among highland Ethiopians, and their skill in irrigation and terracing.

[462] Farming in Ethiopia is primarily the man's and not the woman's work, the standard female occupation, apart from household cares, being spinning. [283] (Cotton is widely grown in the lowlands.) The farmers spend most of their lives at the plough, a one-handled variety drawn by a yoke of oxen. In their [231] right hand they carry a whip with a short handle and long, heavy thong which they continually whirl and crack above the heads of the oxen, to whom, at the same time, they address an endless succession of strange howls and shouts, curses and imprecations. New or long-fallowed grassland is broken in with the plough in the dry season. This complicated process (known as *gai*) involves first scratching the ground in several directions to dislodge the turf, next gathering the sods into numerous heaps, then setting fire to these so that grass and weeds are gradually burnt out, and finally spreading out the soil again. But the great time for ploughing comes after the main rains have reduced the countryside to a sea of soft, dark mud. At this season the fields are peppered with ploughmen. Each successive sowing must be prepared

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

583 and divorced in this manner two or three times she is
586 considered rather a "catch", on account perhaps of her worldly possessions which she has acquired from her previous matrimonial ventures. Then if she does not retire from the world and become a kind of nun she often indulges in the third form of marriage, a solemn religious ceremony which is really binding; it is as a general rule confined to the better class of Abyssinians.

562 Women, some of whom are attractive and even pretty, have, speaking generally, little or no position. There are of course exceptions to this rule, and I have known cases where a wife has by her influence over her husband acquired a certain status for herself. But this is rare, and by a general though not universal rule women are even supposed to eat separately.

562 Nevertheless the higher-class woman manages to
586 hold her own, and if badly treated by her husband has the right of appeal to the Church. And so far as I can gather the woman of any class can divorce her husband as easily as he can divorce her, which gives her a certain protection in itself.

562 In spite of the facility of divorce—possibly to some extent because of the mutual power to exercise it—the
462 lot of women is not at all what one might expect; they
357 are by no means the hewers of wood and drawers of water that one finds so extensively in Africa. They do little or no work, neither washing nor mending their husbands' clothes nor cooking; all this is done by Gourages or others of whom one or more is to be found in almost every household—other than the very poorest —and even amongst one's own servants, acting as "gentlemen's gentlemen".

562 Women of the upper classes are still to some ex-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 621 794 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate term for it than village. The *chĭqā shum* and the local church authorities work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 79 182 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chĭqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

*565 512 *The Daily Round*

Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maid-[462] servant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels [252] her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *tĕff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock [782] become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education, [231] by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes [462] the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

[372] One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room [262] with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm [252] up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay [352] bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash [515] his hands, and *ĭnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by him-[264] self, slowly, pondering the work for the day.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

When he has eaten and washed his hands, the children take their breakfast quickly. One or two of them then lead the remaining animals out to pasture—the cows, which have already been brought back and milked; the sheep and goats; the young draft animals. They spend the day roaming the hills with their flocks in the company of shepherds from nearby farms, unless it is harvest time when each must stay close to his family's fields where the herds feed on stalks and chaff.

The peasant leaves with his older sons or manservants for the fields. (If it is a fasting day, they go directly to work without any breakfast.) The day's activity may consist of cutting the ripe crops with a fine-toothed sickle, or threshing the harvest under the hooves of cattle and mules, or winnowing grain by tossing it up in the breeze. More often than not it will consist of plowing, virtually a year-round occupation. For each crop a field must be plowed at least twice: first to loosen the crusted soil, and then to cover up the seed that has been sown. Planting occurs in several months, the schedule varying according to region. In some regions, for example, barley, wheat, and chick-peas are sown in September and October; corn, beans, and peas in May and June; and *ṭēff* in July. In many areas a January planting is also common. The central position of plowing in the world of the Amhara peasant is shown by the fact that the word for his vocation, *ǐrshā*, literally means "plowing."

On plowing days, the wooden plow with its single iron share and the yoke are carried to the field, and the oxen are driven along with sticks and shouts. If it is sowing time, bags of seed are loaded on donkeys which join the procession. On his way to work the peasant is likely to see a neighbor at a distance and cries of "How did you spend the night?" are exchanged. At the field the team of oxen is yoked and the work begins. It lasts for about five hours, and the peasant is indeed wretched who does not have a helper with whom to take turns steering the heavy plow and cracking the whip as the oxen trace furrow after furrow.

The peasant's wife is too busy in the morning to sit down for a regular breakfast, so she takes bites of food at will as she works about the house. There is much ado in the house as she and her daughters, and perhaps maidservants, carry out a variety of chores—baking *ǐnjarā*, preparing *ṭallā*, spinning cotton, collecting dung for fuel, sweeping rubbish off the floor, carrying water from the spring, weaving straw baskets or mats. The impression of business is heightened by the chickens, which hop in and out of the house as they please, though they must be shooed away from grain drying in the sun.

Toward noon a fresh batch of pepper sauce is prepared. If the peasant is working in a distant field, his wife carries lunch out to him—or else risks being beaten with a stick. If he is not too far away he comes home for lunch, which he eats together with his wife. They talk about what each has done in

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the morning and what remains to be done. The peasant may retire for a nap, and perhaps to lie with his wife, before taking up the afternoon's work. He returns for about three more hours of plowing after his noon rest. The afternoon sun burns down on him; the plow is harder to wield; he plods on. At home the women continue their work, no sooner finishing one task than they attend to another. The mother puts the child who rides on her back to the breast whenever it cries.

The shepherds do not come home for lunch. They have taken some *ĭnjarā* or *dābo* ("whole wheat bread") along with them. In harvest months they enjoy a special treat, roasting grains or pulse which they have snatched from somebody's field. Though their responsibility is great—a boy will be whipped if an animal in his charge gets hurt or lost or if it gets into fields of grain—their work is light. They spend the day running idly, practicing war chants, playing at various adult activities. Their mood is as free as the great spaces about them. As the day grows hotter they are likely to discard their sheepskin covering and move about naked. Toward dusk, the shepherds' spirits quicken. Their songs become more excited; lively melodies are heard from their wooden flutes. It is time to go home to family, supper, and fire.

When father and sons enter after the day's work, they start munching on roasted grains, *ĭnjarā*, or *dābo*. They may drink some *tallā* and relax. It begins to get chilly. The room is dark and smoky, the fleas bite them—but it is the easiest time of the day. The family is together, and everyone enjoys talking and hearing about the homely events of the day. A few hours after dark, supper is served. Parents and older children eat together out of a common basket. Younger children and servants stand respectfully, awaiting their turn, grateful if someone places a large bite of food in their mouths.

After dinner there is a great washing of feet—the father's by his wife or children, the others' by themselves. The peasant recites or reads his evening prayers and lies down on his bed made of strips of cowhide. The children settle for the night on the clay benches. Last of all, the mother covers the embers with ashes, sets out the grain she must grind before dawn, and places her weary body next to that of her husband's.

This grueling schedule is not repeated every day. On nearly half the days in each month heavy labor is not permitted—men may not plow or harvest, women may not grind or spin. These are holy days: Saturdays and Sundays (both of which are honored as the Sabbath in Abyssinia) and the monthly and annual commemorations of the saints.

The woman's schedule on such days is only lightened, not radically altered. Food and drink must still be prepared and served. Except for a possible trip to church with her husband Sunday morning before breakfast, a woman's hours are still confined to the home compound and its obligations. The shepherds must still take care of their herds, though some boys may get together for

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games with sticks and cloth, or wooden, balls. The adult males may do odd jobs around home, such as loading and moving bags of grain, or repairing farm equipment. But they are likely to gather at some convenient spot, perhaps at a boundary between fields, and discuss land disputes, arrange marriages, reconcile quarrels, or tell stories.

The daily activity of the Amhara peasant is somber and severe. It is guided by the constant awareness that one must provide for oneself everything he needs in this world. His is a life of deadening exertion, devoid of casual gaiety. Even in his diversions the mood is generally serious and tense.

One of the Amhara peasant's principal diversions is litigation. On days when heavy labor is forbidden the judge's yard is filled; nor is it ever empty on work days. Some peasants spend as much as twenty to twenty-five per cent of their waking days at court. (Because of its importance in Amhara culture, litigation will be discussed at greater length in later chapters.)

Going to market is another diversion. The trip is made by the peasant or his wife, or both, according to the needs of the household. The wife usually is responsible for transactions dealing with cooking equipment and spices, the husband for animals and farm equipment, while either is competent to negotiate about the great common denominator of Amhara life—grain. Exchanges are made either by barter or currency, which in olden times consisted of salt bars, pepper, and iron, as well as silver.

The market provides an occasion for seeing distant relatives and friends, catching up on the latest news of the area, and generally countering the normal isolation of the peasant's life. It is especially stimulating for children, who may be treated to a piece of sugar cane if they are lucky. But the marketgoers are less absorbed with being sociable than they are with the serious business of locating the items they lack, haggling over the terms of exchange, and getting on the trail in time to arrive home before dark.

Finally, the peasant's day may be devoted to one of the many celebrations that constitute the brightest moments in his life. Huge feasts are held on the occasion of weddings, christenings, and memorial anniversaries. Feasts and special festive activities mark the various religious holidays. Indeed, apart from the alternation of the rainy season (June-September) and the long dry season, and the related alternation of planting and harvesting the different crops, it is the cycle of holidays and weddings that defines the pattern of the Abyssinian year. Yet even these holidays have a fundamentally serious tone. Apart from the feasting, they are chiefly times for the veneration of sacred symbols and the real or symbolic letting out of aggression.

The Yearly Cycle

The new year falls on St. John's Day in September. For this occasion the floor of the peasant's home is strewn with freshly cut grass, tall and green after

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permissive rather than prescriptive, and the degree to which individual rights are protected against the demands of collectivities.

In pursuing this analysis we shall examine in turn the three main institutional orders which were structurally differentiated in Amhara society: the kinship system, the church, and the military-political system. In conclusion we shall discuss some more general features of social organization among the Amhara which relate to the question of individual independence.

Kinship

A base line of social constraint among the Amhara is provided by the obligations inherent in their family system. The husband must work to provide food and to defend the boundaries of the family land against all comers. The wife must care for all that transpires within the home compound—preparing of food, fetching water, caring for infants, spinning cotton, tending the fire—and must avoid sexual relationships with other men. The children must tend the flocks, do other work chores, and generally obey the slightest command of any of their elders. Neglect of any of these basic obligations brings sharp reprisals: divorce of the husband, beatings of the wife and children.

Obligations toward the parents persist, moreover, long after the children have married and established families of their own. Young married men are supposed to contribute one or two days a week to working their fathers' land, and to assist them in time of litigation. They are obliged to care for their parents when the latter have become too old to provide for themselves, an obligation sometimes discharged on a rotating basis among the surviving children. There is also a solemn obligation for the children to arrange the appropriate memorial feasts (*tazkār*) following the death of a parent, especially the one that is due on the fortieth day after death.

Adolescent children are subject to the will of their parents with respect to choice of a spouse, and youths are expected to follow their fathers' wishes in connection with adult work roles. Threat of disinheritance is the powerful consideration that underpins these constraints. For their part, the parents are obliged to keep their land in the family. They may not sell it to outsiders, and must bequeath goods and land to their children, dividing them equally among the consanguine children, with perhaps a certain amount extra for the oldest son.

With regard to siblings and more distant kin, however, relations are rather casual and obligations few. Although residence tends to be virilocal among the Amhara, descent is bilateral. Except for a small number of royal and aristocratic families, therefore, there are no obligations with respect to corporate lineages. The absence of formal structure in extended kin relations is